

6th Sunday Easter C
May 26, 2019
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If you listened attentively to the reading today, you've noticed that the Holy Spirit is mentioned in each of the readings. It is clear from these readings that the Christian community is indebted to the Spirit for its very existence and well-being. It is the Spirit who stirs up in us the waters of our baptism at crucial stages of our lives, and it is the spirit that strengthens us at Confirmation. And it is the Holy Spirit's job to produce Christ-like character in us.

The Spirit is not calm and sedate. While the spirit creates, strengthens and preserves the church, there is no limiting, or enclosing the Spirit in any one creed or church. As one preacher puts it, the Spirit is **more verb** than noun.

God does not merely observe what creation is doing but is both Creator and Participant in the very process of the universe. It is also the Holy Spirit who shakes us awake into awareness of injustice and sin. The Spirit causes us to get involved in the less-than-orderly task of making things right for the disadvantaged and abused of our world. And because this work of justice seems never to be done, the spirit helps us grow and mature in our faith, it bring us back through chastisement or conviction, it is to help us become the greatest example we can be of Christ's love to the world.

We can't reproduce the character of Jesus on our own or by our own strength. New Year's resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives.

When we hear the phrase, "the power of the Holy Spirit," many people think of miracles and intense emotions. But most of the time, the Holy Spirit's power is released in our lives in quiet, unassuming ways that you aren't even aware of or feel. The Holy Spirit often nudges us with "a gentle whisper."

We choose to do the right thing in situations and then trust God's Spirit to give us his power, love, faith and wisdom to do it. Since God's Spirit lives inside of us, these things are always available for the asking.

It is the Spirit who nourishes us in prayer and keeps us committed to the task of being a co-creator with the Spirit of a new creation. As I said, the Spirit is **more verb** than noun.

Many names have been used to describe this third person of the trinity. Holy ghost, Holy Spirit, spirit of truth, comforter, counselor, advocate and the list goes on.

In chapter 14 of the Gospel, Jesus refers to the holy spirit as "advocate," counselor which is the Greek noun "parakletos" meaning, "the one who

exhorts, comforts or helps" and "the one who makes appeals on one's behalf."

After three years of sharing his company, Jesus knew that the disciples were not ready or capable of proclaiming and building the kingdom of God on their own.

This was not simply because they were fisherman, tax collectors, and zealots who were in the habit of not understanding Jesus' words and deeds. No, the truth is that anyone, including us, needs the assistance of the Holy Spirit in living the lives Christ calls us to live.

As in the first reading Barnabas and Paul, Judas and Silas were sent out accompanied by the Holy Spirit, 'the advocate', to teach and spread the message of Christ, so can we do just that!

The Holy Spirit wants to help us represent Christ and to continue on with the ministry that Christ initiated in us at Baptism and strengthened in us in Confirmation.

The Holy Spirit, the advocate, gives us the confidence of not having been left orphans devoid of Jesus' guiding presence. As the Gospel reads: "*I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name-- **he** will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.*"

As we continue to pay attention to the Mass, we'll notice that the Spirit is mentioned no less than ten times. In the Creed, our profession of faith, which we will recite immediately after the homily, we say '*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...*' we pray these words each Sunday, as we worship God here and in Churches throughout the world.

At the same time, the life which the Holy Spirit gives is being attacked and destroyed by abortion. In the United States alone, some 4,000 children are legally killed each day by this surgical procedure, in the name of pro-choice. For a people filled with the Spirit, this is a tragedy that cannot possibly be ignored. Nor can we doubt for a moment that the Spirit who gives life will also give us all we need to defend it.

The creation account in Genesis 1 tells us that "a mighty wind," the "breath" or "spirit" of God hovered over the waters and brought life and light out of chaos and darkness. The Holy Spirit is proclaimed in the Creed to be "the Lord and Giver of Life," and this is true both on a natural and supernatural level. To worship the Holy Spirit, then, demands that we stand against all that destroys life.

On the first Easter night, Jesus breathes His Spirit upon the apostles (Jn.20:22), that they too might bring new life out of the chaos and darkness of sin.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth (see Jn.15:26), we can therefore ask the Holy Spirit to give us an understanding of the value of

the human person. The Spirit enables us to cry out, "Abba! Father!" in Romans 8:16 it says: " *The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*". Abortion, on the other hand, sees the human person as a disposable object.

The Spirit of Truth likewise shows us the truth about our sins (Jn.16:8 *when he comes, he will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation*). In Jesus we come to understand the difference between good and evil. This works directly against the dynamics of the abortion movement, which identifies a moral evil as a "right". Right is not the destruction of human life. What is right and what is good is God's love the respect of human life from conception to natural death.

It is Jesus Christ who made the sacrifice of Himself "through the eternal spirit" (Heb.9:14). It is in the Holy Spirit that we too, have the power to love, as we heard in today's Gospel: "Jesus said to his disciples "whoever loves me will keep my word, and my father will love him."

The Spirit Himself is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. He unites the human family, whereas abortion divides it.

The same Holy Spirit who created the universe, descended upon the womb of Mary, came as tongues of fire at Pentecost, and leads the Church on her mission, is the one who calls and equips us for our pro-life work. Let us not lack for a moment the confidence and the joy which comes from Him, and which impel us to build a Culture of Life.

Come, Holy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth! Amen!